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ABSTRACT

This paper examines contemporary forces stimulating school-home partnerships and discusses parent program measures that can be used in needs assessment, evaluation, planning, and special research applications. The first half of the paper briefly examines some influences causing schools to become more involved with parents, such as legislation and social forces. The second half treats measurement techniques for assessment of parental needs. A copy of a needs assessment questionnaire is included. (Author/LD)

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INSTRUMENTS FOR ASSESSING PARENTING NEEDS AND FOR EVALUATING PARENTING PROGRAM EFFECTS

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INSTRUMENTS FOR ASSESSING PARENTING NEEDS AND FOR EVALUATING PARENTING PROGPAM EFFECTS

Edward E. Gotts

The following discussion is designed to provide the educational administrator with a perspective for decision making regarding the assessment of parenting needs and the evaluation of parenting program effects. This is accomplished by considering first some contemporary forces which are influencing schools to become more involved with parents. Three of these forces are reviewed briefly: (1) the strength of evidence regarding parenting program effects and parental influences on the lives of their children and teen-agers, (2) legislation calling for parent involvement, and (3) social changes which are affecting both families and schools. Second, the measurement of parent needs and of program effects are discussed and particular measures are examined.

Growth of Parent Involvement Efforts

Recent studies and reports have strongly confirmed the value of school programs which involve parents in meaningful ways (a) in schools and (b) in their children's learning and development (for example, see: Brandt, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Comptroller General, 1979; Education Commission of the States, 1979; White and Others, 1973). While the evidence supports the foregoing statement most clearly for early childhood efforts (i.e., at preschool and primary grade levels), there is also direct evidence of effectiveness of home-oriented programs across the elementary school years.

Satisfactory evidence regarding such "program" effects is scanty at the secondary level, although research suggests that parental effects

continue to be important to children's mental functioning and school progress during the secondary school years (Walberg & Marjoribanks, 1973; 1976). Conger's (1977) careful review of evidence also confirms the influence of home life in the secondary school years on (a) staying in school and graduating; (b) successful transition from high school into the world of work or higher education; (c) moral development and delinquency; (d) alcohol and drug use; and (e) problems of mental, emotional, and physical health. Thus, although scientifically validated evidence is lacking of effective secondary school-home partnership programs, the need and potential for developing such programs is exceedingly well documented.

The preceding considerations serve to point up one source of a growing interest in school-home partnership efforts--namely, there is reason to believe that these efforts can improve significantly children's and adolescents' chances of receiving the full benefits of their educational opportunities. By definition this also means that such efforts can correspondingly increase the success of schools in fulfilling their most fundamental purpose: the education of all children.

Legislative Developments

Current interest in building school-home linkages also can be traced to a number of legislated roles for parent involvement in public schools. These roles have been described in a legislative review (Gotts, 1979) which analyzes both federal and state trends in laws and practices affecting parent involvement. Some examples of legislation include: the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (P.L. 93-247), Family Rights and Privacy Act, Head Start - Follow Through Act of 1979, Education Amendments of 1978 (affecting for example, Title I's Parent Advisory Councils, and implementing provisions of Title II

the Basic Skills Act), and the Education of (All) Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142)--all of which have potential for impacting school practices relative to families.

Social Forces Affecting Families and Schools

School administrators in many districts are keenly aware of the current dip in school enrollment which has resulted from a whole complex of social changes that have caused women to participate increasingly in the work force and to bear fewer children. Shrinking school enrollments have come at a time of serious and chronic inflation that has resulted in part from world-wide changes in the control and pricing of fossil fuel energy supplies. Taxpayers, faced by a gradually eroding national and personal standard of living, have applied their concerns at one of the few available points of leverage: often voting down their local school bond levies. Tax dollars have, as a result, become precariously scarce in some school districts. In the face of such problems it is important to recall that some lines of evidence suggest that, irrespective of its influence on the achievement of children, parent involvement may positively influence community attitudes toward schools--for example, see a report of B. D. Bowles' research (Little Things Make a Difference, 1979).

The annual study of public attitudes toward the schools may be used to study public reactions to various features of the present context of social change; the poll reflects people's reactions, for example, to statements (a) which describe or appraise the current state of the schools and (b) which propose various programs or other approaches for addressing today's educational issues. The most recent of these polls (Gallup, 1979) once more affirmed parental interest in having public schools provide training and information to parents to help them with their child-rearing

responsibilities. This conclusion has been strongly supported in all of the most recent Gallup polls. One might well wonder on what other issues parents could agree by such a large margin on what they would like to see the schools doing today!

Measurement in Parent Programs

The research literature in this area is enormous, as can be judged by a cursory examination of published measurement techniques (Straus & Brown, 1978). Whereas this abundance of measures means that much is available, the sheer magnitude is likely to confuse, overburden or overwhelm school practitioners who desire to measure parent needs and to evaluate parenting program effects. What is needed, consequently, is a framework or structure within which the practitioner can sort out the measurement issues. Such a framework has been developed (Gotts, Spriggs & Sattes, 1979) in the form of a classification system which represents parent-oriented programs and the particular focuses and goals which characterize them. Such a framework greatly reduces the number of measurement options which the busy decision maker must consider.

Parent Needs

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) performed a national study in 1975-76 of parent education needs relative to the content experiences and the types of program presentations (e.g., film, group discussion, etc.) which parents of elementary school children might desire (Coan & Gotts, 1976). One product of this work was a highly usable questionnaire that could be completed by parents with minimum assistance, after it had been brought home by their children. This measure "Learning to be a Better Parent" is available in both English

and Spanish versions. The instrument reliably measures parent needs in terms of six areas: Family Care, Child Growth and Development, Child Management, Self as a Parent, Treating the Child Like a Person, and Baby Care (Attachment A). These content areas readily translate into curriculum plans to meet parent needs through parent education in groups.

Parent needs can be measured in greater depth using an interview approach developed by AEL for a long-term follow up study of a home-oriented program. This interview uses drawings of children and parents plus standardized questioning to examine the extent to which parents are able to support and encourage their children's development of: trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, and a sense of personal identity (Gotts & Paul, 1979). A study of the measure's reliability and validity have shown its value for use in individualized in-depth needs assessment (Gotts, in press). This same feature makes the interview useful for individual program planning. This measure can, moreover, be used in a test-retest design to evaluate the results of program experiences provided to parents.

In assessing parenting needs it is also desirable to have an inexpensive method of identifying those children whose in-school behavior suggests they may need special assistance. Such a measure has been developed over the past 15 years. It has been tested (a) in group form, for screening entire classrooms and (b) in individual checklist form, for evaluating individual children (Gotts, 1976). The measure identifies a child's placement within a circumplex model (Attachment B) according to (a) interpersonal style and (b) whether the child is coping or not coping with the school environment. The 140 item scale also measures symptoms of anxiety and depression and the extent to which a child is well organized in

schoolwork. In situations where parent education is used as a means of preventing school failure and behavior problems, this measure can be used to evaluate the program's success in preventing specified unfavorable child outcomes (e.g., prevention of behavior disorders). I am distributing separately a brochure on the HOPE Follow-Up Study which illustrates how the Indirect Parent Interview and the School Behavior Checklist have been used together in a complementary fashion.

We can also recommend from extensive experience another child measure, the Tasks of Emotional Development (T.E.D.) Test (Cohen & Weil, 1975) which provides a more in-depth measure of child needs in 13 essential developmental areas (e.g., peer socialization, self-concept, attitude toward achievement, etc.). The approach of the T.E.D. Test makes it particularly well suited to conjoint use with the Indirect Parent Interview (Gotts & Paul, 1979). The T.E.D. can serve as an especially sensitive measure of significant changes in children which result from help provided through the family.

Assessing Community Needs and Services

Planning for a parenting effort also may call for gaining a better understanding of the family-oriented services available in the community and schools. This can be accomplished with the Survey of Parenting Programs/Services (Snow, 1979b), which is based on a thoroughly tested method of community survey taken from AEL's Home Visitor's Kit. (The Kit, 1977, is available from Human Sciences Press, New York, New York 10011.) Use of the Survey is a part of AEL's "Regional Parenting Surveys," which are described in another brochure distributed to AASA session participants.

A related instrument which is used in conjunction with the Survey is the Parent Interview Schedule (Snow, 1979a). This interview examines

parents' familiarity with and use of available school and community programs. In addition, it explores individual parents' sources of help and assistance, among other variables. This instrument's use is, likewise, indicated in the Regional Parenting Surveys brochure.

The information provided by the two instruments described above can be of considerable value in decision making about whether and what kind of parenting program to initiate.

Special Research Measures

In addition to the measures already described, AEL has assembled and validated two special research measures: the Direct Child Interview (Spriggs, 1979) and the Direct Parenting Interview (Singh, Sattes & Gotts, 1978). These direct interviews provide parallel measures of children, from children and their parents, in the following vital areas, among others: level of academic aspiration and level of vocational aspiration, expectations of successes in academics and vocation, and satisfaction/dissatisfaction with performance. The interviews provide other useful information on the strength of the home learning environment, child rearing styles, and fundamental family characteristics (e.g., social status, educational attainment, family size, etc.). These measures appear to be of particular value for studying programs which seek to involve parents in ways that faciliate their children's levels of aspiration, and so forth.

Conclusion

The preceding presentation has emphasized (1) contemporary forces stimulating school-home partnerships and (2) parenting program measures for use in needs assessment, evaluation, planning, and special research applications. Such a brief presentation necessarily touches only upon

the highlights of these measures and their potential applications. AEL has had experience with all of the measures cited and can confirm their usefulness and practicability for the stated purposes, when used in quite varied school and community settings. Our experience further confirms that local school personnel can be taught to use these measures effectively. Finally, they together provide a broad and reasonably comprehensive set of tools to support administrative decision making.

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LEARNING TO BE A BETTER PARENT

What to do: First, read what it says below about each thing you might learn more about. Then decide how much you feel you need or want to learn more about that. For example, if you feel you already know all or just about as much as you need or want to know about "How Children Grow and Develop," then mark the box Nothing More At All. However, if you feel you need or want to learn more about that, then you may wish to answer A Little More or A Lot More. Put a check mark (✓) in the box under A Lot More, A Little More or Nothing More At All for each question. We are interested in what you feel. You may, of course, feel that you need or want to learn more about some things, and nothing more about others. No one will judge you as a parent, whatever your answers are. If you do not want to answer a question, then leave it blank.

Name _____

My City & State _____

My Children's Ages (in years) _____

Name of Nearest Grade School _____

_____

	A LOT MORE	A LITTLE MORE	NOTHING MORE AT ALL
I. HOW CHILDREN GROW AND DEVELOP. How much do you feel you need or want to learn more about:			
1. Where you can find out about how children develop.	( )	( )	( )
2. What your child should be able to learn at his age, so as not to "push" your child too much.	( )	( )	( )
3. How children grow into special, one-of-a-kind people.	( )	( )	( )
4. How the world looks and sounds to your child, and how to help him learn about it.	( )	( )	( )
5. How your child's personality is formed.	( )	( )	( )
6. How your child learns to use his body by playing (runs, jumps).	( )	( )	( )
II. TAKING BETTER CARE OF YOUR BABY. How much do you feel you need or want to learn more about:			
1. What happens before the baby comes (what to eat; what drugs not to take; how long to wait before having another baby; things that can happen to the baby).	( )	( )	( )
2. How babies learn to talk (what the baby hears; what it learns from what you do and say).	( )	( )	( )
3. Helping the baby feel good (not too warm or cool; enough to eat; food that might upset the baby; giving the baby room to move around).	( )	( )	( )
III. TREATING YOUR CHILD LIKE A PERSON. How much do you feel you need or want to learn more about how to:			
1. Tell what children are doing by watching them.	( )	( )	( )
2. Help your child see and accept his or her own feelings.	( )	( )	( )
3. Show love and care to your child.	( )	( )	( )
4. Talk with your child about his problems and answer his questions.	( )	( )	( )
5. Help your child to behave when he starts to fight.	( )	( )	( )

OE Form 438, 10/75

	A LOT MORE	A LITTLE MORE	NOTHING MORE AT ALL
6. Help your child learn to get along with family and friends.	( )	( )	( )
7. Help your child see why rules are good.	( )	( )	( )
IV. TAKING CARE OF YOUR FAMILY. How much do you feel you need or want to learn more about how to:			
1. Pick things for the child's bed and for him to wear (so that they last and are easy to take care of).	( )	( )	( )
2. Find and take care of a home for your family (how to shop and pay for housing and furniture).	( )	( )	( )
3. Pick the right foods and take care of them so they will not spoil (fix meals that are good for your family's health).	( )	( )	( )
V. TEACHING AND TRAINING YOUR CHILD. How much do you feel you need or want to learn more about:			
1. What ways of teaching will work best with your child (the way you teach; use of books, TV).	( )	( )	( )
2. How to control your child by using reward, praise and correction in a loving way (how to help your child control himself).	( )	( )	( )
3. How to teach your child to be neat and clean and to show good manners.	( )	( )	( )
4. How to get your child to go to bed on time (and to rest or take naps).	( )	( )	( )
5. How to get your child to change from doing one thing to doing something else.	( )	( )	( )
6. How to plan your child's use of TV (picking TV programs, not watching too much TV).	( )	( )	( )
7. How to place your chairs, tables and other things so that your child will have room to play and learn (and keeping some things out of sight so your child will not want them).	( )	( )	( )
8. How to feed your child; teach him to feed himself; and make eating fun for your child.	( )	( )	( )
9. How to teach your child to dress and undress.	( )	( )	( )
10. How to help your child think for himself (choose what he wants to do; make plans).	( )	( )	( )
11. How to teach your child to tell right from wrong (to be moral).	( )	( )	( )
VI. KEEPING YOUR FAMILY SAFE AND WELL. How much do you feel you need or want to learn more about:			
1. How to keep your child from get[illegible] (and how to give first aid).	( )	( )	( )
2. How to keep your child well (get [illegible] and have the doctor check your child).	( )	( )	( )

	A LOT MORE	A LITTLE MORE	NOTHING MORE AT ALL
3. How to know if something is wrong with your child (is not learning; cannot walk well; cannot see or hear well).	( )	( )	( )
4. How to know when your child is sick (has a fever or says he hurts some place).	( )	( )	( )
5. How to pick things that are safe to play with.	( )	( )	( )
6. How to tell if your child is growing right (body size, height, weight).	( )	( )	( )
VII. TAKING CARE OF THINGS AT HOME. How much do you feel you need or want to learn more about:			
1. Making good use of your time (plan your time for child care, house work, school or job, time for yourself and your friends).	( )	( )	( )
2. Getting good help with child care (day care, baby sitter, nursery school).	( )	( )	( )
3. How your child deals with the way that your family lives (people in the home, what they do together, how they get along).	( )	( )	( )
4. Finding help for people who don't take care of their children, or who hurt their children.	( )	( )	( )
VIII. YOURSELF AS A PARENT. How much do you feel you need or want to learn more about:			
1. Your own feelings and habits and how these help or hurt your child care (how they affect your child care).	( )	( )	( )
2. Your need to make your child mind you (how your own needs can affect how your child feels about himself, and your child's learning).	( )	( )	( )
3. Why your child will not mind you and how this bothers you (how to get over being upset).	( )	( )	( )
4. How to be sure that you are doing what is best for your child (or your worries about what other people think).	( )	( )	( )

What to do: Just as before, read what it says about each thing from which you can learn. That is, if you think you would enjoy learning about being a better parent from "reading books," then you may wish to answer A Lot or A Little. But if you would not enjoy learning from "reading books," then mark the box Not At All. You may, of course, think that you would like to learn from some things and not from others. Put a check mark (✓) in the box under A Lot, A Little or Not At All for each question.

	A LOT	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL
IX. HOW TO LEARN ABOUT BEING A BETTER PARENT. How much would you like to learn about being a better parent from:			
1. Reading books.	( )	( )	( )
2. Talking with parents in group meetings.	( )	( )	( )
3. Watching a special TV series.	( )	( )	( )

A LOT

4. Seeing movies near my home (at a school). ( )

5. Having a person visit my home and talk with me each week. ( )

6. Seeing slides and hearing a person tell about them. ( )

7. Reading about this in magazines or in small newspapers (4 to 8 pages long). ( )

8. Hearing a special radio series. ( )

9. Listening to records or tapes. ( )

10. Playing games that teach me to be a better parent. ( )

On TV or radio or in the movies, how much would you like to learn from:

1. A funny show (humor, comedy, jokes). ( )

2. A talk show with well known guests and parents. ( )

3. Stories about real people (not humor). ( )

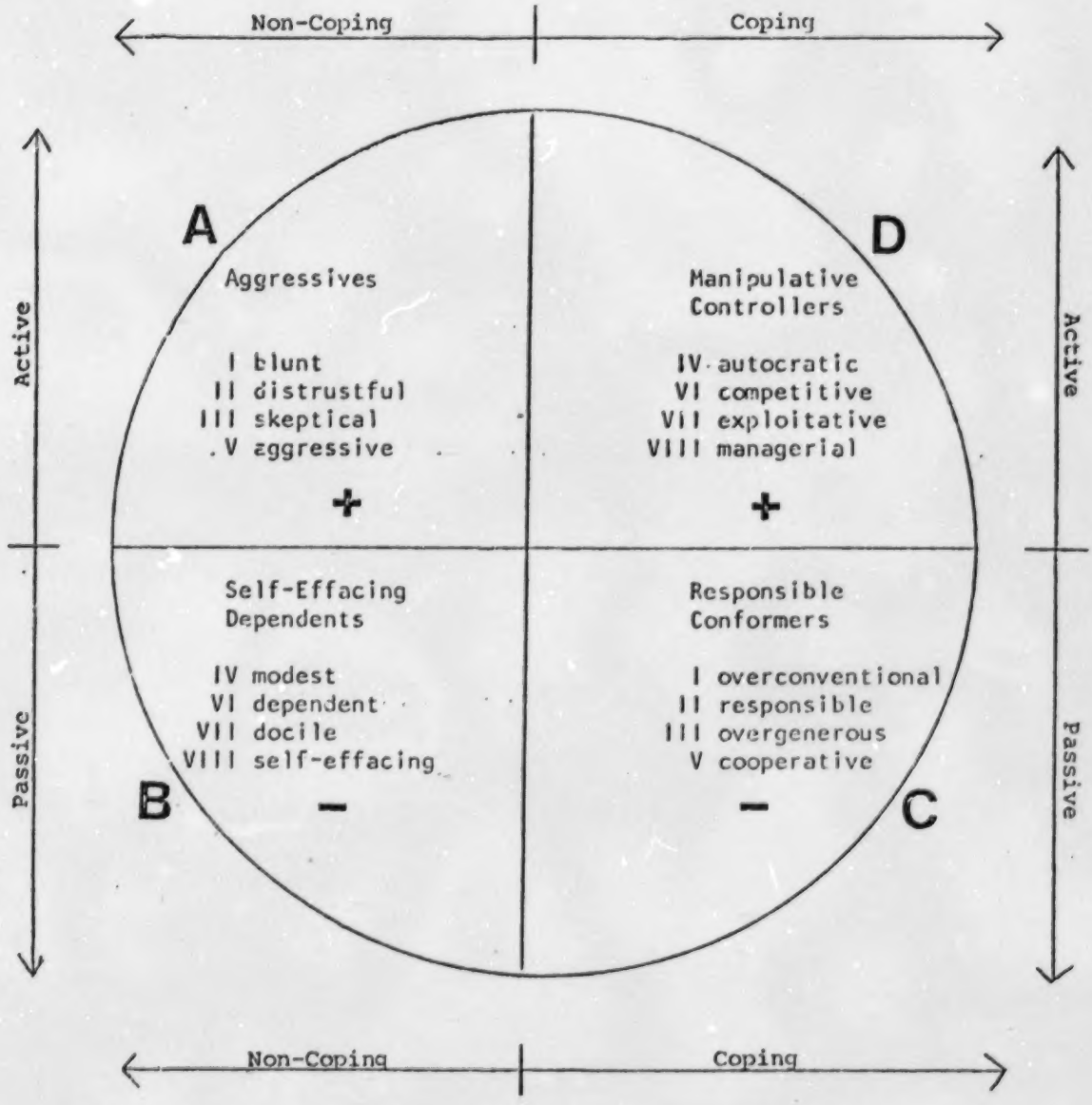
4. Special stories done by actors (not humor). ( )

5. An M.D. (doctor) or other expert. ( )

6. A show that goes into real people's homes. ( )

X. OTHER IDEAS. What else do you think you need or want to learn more about in order to be a better parent? Print so that your ideas will be easy to read.

Typology of Children's In-School Interpersonal Behavior Styles



Source: Gotts, E.E., Phillips, B. N., & Adams, R. L., Journal of School Psychology, 1968-69, 7 (3) 54-62.

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